

Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

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R 010716Z AUG 75

FM AMEMBASSY CANBERRA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6320

INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

AMEMBASSY MANILA

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON

C O N F I D E N T I A L CANBERRA 5196

EXDIS

DEPARTMENT PASS SECRETARY

DEPARTMENT ALSO PASS CINCPAC HONOLULU

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: SEATO

SUBJECT: THE FUTURE OF SEATO

1. SUMMARY: SHORTLY BEFORE HIS DEPARTURE AMBASSADOR GREEN DISCUSSED FUTURE OF SEATO WITH ACTING SECRETARY OF AUSTRALIAN DEPT OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS. HE CORRECTLY ANTICIPATED DEPT POSITION ON SEATO AND MADE MAIN POINTS IN REFTEL. AUSTRALIAN PRESS COMMENT ON KHUKRIT-MARCOS COMMUNIQUE HAS BEEN SPARSE, THOUGH SYDNEY MORNING HEARLD AUG 1 CARRIED EDITORIAL REGRETTING DEMISE OF SEATO DESPITE ITS FAULTS. END SUMMARY.

2. ON JULY 29, SHORTLY BEFORE AMBASSADOR GREEN'S DEPARTURE AND DURING AFTER-LUNCHEON CONVERSATION WITH JOHN ROWLAND, THE ACTING SECRETARY OF THE DFA, THE SUBJECT OF SEATO'S FUTURE AROSE, ROWLAND, SAID GOA HAD NOT YET RECEIVED ANY INTERPRETATIVE REPORTING FROM MANILA AFTER THE KHUKRIT MARCOS MEETINGS AND SO FAR HAD ONLY THE COMMUNIQUE TO GO ON. HE THOUGHT THAT INDICATED
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PRETTY CLEARLY THAT SEATO'S FUTURE WAS NOW UP FOR DIS

CUSSION.

3. AMBASSADOR GREEN ASKED IF THE DFA HAD INSTRUCTED THEIR EMBASSIES TO HOLD UP ON PUSHING FOR A DISCUSSION OF SEATO'S FUTURE. ROWLAND SAID THEY HAD INDEED BEEN SO INSTRUCTED. REALLY, THE INITIAL INSTRUCTIONS HAD NOT RPT NOT URGED AUSTRALIAN AMBASSADORS IN ALL SEATO CAPITALS TO PRESS SEATO PARTNERS ON THE SUBJECT OF SEATO'S FUTURE. HE RECALLED FOREIGN MINISTER WILLE-SEE'S TALKS WITH ROMULO AND MARCOS IN PEKING IN EARLY JUNE ALONG THE LINES WE HAD BEEN TOLD BEFORE. AMBASSADOR GREEN SAID HE THOUGHT THAT IT WAS MOST IMPORTANT THAT INITIATIVES IN THIS REGARD COME FROM THE ASIAN PARTNERS AND IN PARTICULAR FROM THAILAND. ROWLAND AGREED AND SAID THAT AS FAR AS THE GOA WAS CONCERNED IT HAD NO PARTICULAR TIME SCALE IN MIND. HOWEVER, IT SEEMED PRETTY CLEAR TO GOA THAT SEATO'S FUTURE WOULD INEVITABLY BE A SUBJECT FOR DISCUSSION IN THE SEPTEMBER SEATO COUNCIL MEETING IN NEW YORK AND THAT ALL THE PARTNERS WOULD HAVE TO BE READY TO DISCUSS SEATO'S FUTURE.

4. ROWLAND WENT ON TO SAY THAT EVEN AFTER THE KHUKRIT/MARCOS COMMUNIQUE THE SUBJECT OF SEATO DIDN'T SEEM TO BE GETTING MUCH ATTENTION FROM THE AUSTRALIAN PRESS. DFA GUIDANCE IN CASE OF ENQUIRIES WAS TO INDICATE ON AN UN-ATTRIBUTED BASIS THAT AS A MEMBER OF SEATO AUSTRALIA WOULD BE WILLING TO DISCUSS ITS FUTURE IF THE ASIAN PARTNERS WISHED AND TO NOTE THAT SO FAR AS DFA WAS AWARE THERE WERE NO INITIATIVES CURRENT TO DISUCSS THE MANILA PACT AS SUCH.

5. COMMENT: ROWLAND WAS CORRECT IN NOTING THAT SEATO HAS ATTRACTED LITTLE COMMENT FROM AUSTRALIAN PRESS. ONLY SIGNIFICANT COMMENT WAS SUBSEQUENT EDITORIAL IN SYDNEY MORNING HERALD AUG 1, WHICH NOTED IMPENDING DEMISE OF SEATO WITH REGRET, STATING QTE...ITS HCIEF IMPORTANCE WAS AS AN INSTRUMENT FORMALLY COMMITTING THE POWER OF THE UNITED STATES TO THE SECURITY OF THE REGION. AFTER ITS DEMISE, IT WILL BE HARDER - PERHAPS IMPOSSIBLE - FOR AN AMERICAN ADMINISTRATION TO GET CONGRESSIONAL BACKING
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FOR THE DUSTY, HALF-FORGOTTEN MANILA TREATY. ITS END ARMS AMERICAN PARA-SIOLATIONISM WITH ONE MORE JUSTIFICATION. ITS END, THEREFORE, IS AUSTRALIA'S LOSS...END
QTE HERALD IS, OF COURSE, STAUNCH OPPONENT OF LABOR GOVERNMENT, BUT IT REMAINS ONE OF AUSTRALIA'S MOST PRESTIGIOUS NEWSPAPERS. LACK OF OTHER COMMENT IN THIS VEIN SUGGESTS THAT THIS IS RELATIVELY LONE VOICE AT THIS POINT.

6. AMBASSADOR GREEN, IN CONVERSATION WITH ROWLAND, CORRECTLY ANTICIPATED MAIN ELEMENTS OF DEPARTMENT'S POSITION ON SEATO IN REFTEL. EMBASSY WILL ADHERE TO INSTRUCTIONS IN REF A AND MAKE POSITION KNOWN IF ASKED FURTHER. PARA 5 REF B NOTES THAT ASST SECRETARY HABIB, AS OF JULY 22, HOPED TO HAVE U.S. VIEWS ON SEATO POLICY READY TO CONVEY TO AUSTRALIA WITHIN THE WEEK. AS REF A APPEARS TO BE THIS STATEMENT OF U.S. VIEWS, DOES DEPT PLAN TO DISCUSS THIS ISSUE FURTHER WITH AMBASSADOR SHAW.
PERCIVAL

NOTE BY OC/T: NOT PASSED CINCPAC AND SECRETARY.

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